


17 June 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

1. This memorandum is for information only.
2. For your information note on page 3 that the American Public Relations Association throws down their first letter where they ask PROs to "squeal on the boss." I discussed this at the time with Jim Hagerty. I note, however, that Mel White, one of the committee to receive complaints, is still on the government payroll. He is Chief of Information in the Office of Scientific Research of the Air Force.

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STANLEY J. GROGAN
Assistant to the Director

cc: DDCI

APRA American Public Relations Association
1010 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington 5, D.C. • DIstrict 7-1427



Dear Government Information Officer:

A letter from APRA's National President, Jim MacWithey, several days ago asked you for information about instances of Government Information people being prevented from giving out non-security information for policy reasons, being required to assist in propaganda or political promotions, or being punished for giving out non-security information in response to queries, or any other instances where the objectives of the Congress are being or have been frustrated by an inadequate information program.

We have had a gratifying response, but some replies indicate that we did not make our purpose entirely clear. A couple of the applications for membership we have received as a result of Mr. MacWithey's letter also seem due to misunderstanding of the committee's objective. Also, some replies very frankly view our purpose with alarm, or take exception to the word "legitimizing" in our stated effort for "legitimizing the position of the Government Information Specialist."

To the best of our knowledge, only two agencies (USDA and Public Health Service) have the right and duty to disseminate public information spelled out in public laws. (If you know of any others, we would be very pleased to learn of them.) Thus, public information work done by other agencies is done without specific authority in law. We believe that it ought to be established in all Federal agencies by public law, including such exceptions and limitations as the Congress chooses to impose. This is part of our objective.

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A second part of the objective is to eliminate by law the improper use of Government Information people. We construe as proper the explaining or furthering of a program authorized by a public law. This includes the use of all PI and PR methods and media, within appropriate budgetary limitations.

We have received arguments that the PR function does not belong in a Government agency. However, no one seriously objects to the recruiting work of the Armed Forces, the savings bond drives of the Treasury Department, the fine "Smokey Bear" fire prevention campaign of the Forest Service, the "benefits" publicity of the Veterans Administration, the vital general information program of the Federal Civil Defense Administration and the Food and Drug Administration, the health-promotion campaigns of the Public Health Service, the Bureau of Old Age and Survivors Insurance program, and many other excellent, aggressive, Government public relations activities.

However, if the head of an agency, representing a political group, believes that Congress should socialize baseball, promote wigetry, or protect the widows of philophobes, the influencing of Congress and the public for or against such proposals should be the function of the political group which advocates it. Career information people should not be asked or ordered to assist in such campaigns.

A third part of our objective is to have Federal agencies ask for, and Congress approve, realistic budgets and staffing patterns for public information offices. Because the function in most agencies has not been clearly authorized by law, the cost and personnel are disguised or hidden in the budgets and structures of many agencies. This is primarily what we mean by the need to "legitimize" the information function.

To summarize: We believe that there is a need for the PI and PR function in Government; that it should be spelled out in public laws which authorize, define, and limit it; that it should be accounted for like any other useful function in Government; and that it should be done by qualified people hired and administered in accordance with proper civil-service criteria.

We regret the inference in the first letter that we want you to 'squeal on your boss'. We do not. We need information on past and present abuses in order to recommend legislation with desirable limitations. We do not need specific names and dates.

A national APRA convention established this committee in 1953 for the purpose of advancing the profession of public relations in government. Past President Bill Treadwell spelled it out in his outgoing address on April 4, 1956, which was generally applauded by Government information officers in and out of APRA.

Our effort has no political or partisan connotations whatsoever. We welcome, equally, examples predating the present Administration.

We are working with the Moss Subcommittee of Congress at the request of the committee. We will be glad to work with the Administration or any group which has an interest in the accomplishment of our objective.

We thank those of you who have written or phoned, whether to contribute, to approve, or to argue. We thank those who have suggested other areas in which this committee might be useful, such as the appointment, salary, and grade standards now current in Government information work. We intend to explore these areas to the fullest possible extent.

Please feel free to contact any member of the committee.

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